

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses about the background of the study, problem identification, research questions, purpose of the study, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

In recent years, assessment has become a big issue in higher education because assessment is an essential component in teaching learning process. However, the importance of assessment has increased even further. Assessment is used in order to diagnose students' needs to guide teachers in teaching, and also to enable teachers, students, and others (parents and administrator) determine whether they have achieve their goals (Wiggins, 2005, p. 13). It means that assessment is essential for all students because it can give the information about the students' learning achievement based on the learning objectives and activities. Assessment also provide information to faculty about teaching effectiveness (Biggs, 2003; Ramsden, 2003) and to students about how well they are doing and how can they improve their learning (Gibbs, 2006, Gibbs, 2004). Moreover, the information that is provided by the assessment can motivates the students to do better in their learning process.

Governments and education systems have placed a high priority on the development of skills and attributes necessary for life and work in the 21st century (Masters, 2013, p. 27). It means that higher education has responsibility to create a

good quality of their graduates to face the global challenge. This statement is supported by ACT No. 12 of 2012, Art. 18(2) on higher education who said that higher education should prepare their students to be critical thinker to enter real world and creating jobs as well as developing their selves to be professional. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of the educational process, educators should look into the assessment practices that are employed by the teachers.

Assessment is the key of good teaching learning process and it is linked to the learning outcomes. The learning outcomes refers to the cognitive level that involved in it in order to achieve critical thinking level. In recent approach of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to improve quality in higher education has been to focus on learning outcomes and their assessment, on the specification of standards and on the role of external examiners to assure the standards (Gibbs, 2004, p. 3). In the same way Derek Rowntree stated that ‘if we wish to discover the truth about an educational system, we must first look to its assessment procedures’ (Rowntree, 1987, p.1 cited in Gibbs, 2004). It means that teachers in higher education have to improve the quality of their assessment in order to make a good result in educational system. In a poor system of education, the components (curriculum, teaching and assessment tasks) are not necessarily integrated and tuned to support learning, so that only ‘academic’ students spontaneously use higher-order learning processes. In an integrated system, all aspects of teaching and assessment are tuned to support high level learning.

In addition, Bloxham (2010) pointed out that assessment shape the experience of students and influence their behavior more than the teaching they receive. While

Biggs & Tang (2011) stated that ‘students may use learning activities that are of lower cognitive level than are needed to achieve the outcomes, resulting surface approach to learning; or they can use high level activities appropriate to achieve the intended learning outcomes, resulting deep approach to learning.’. Biggs (2011) argue that to achieve most intended learning outcomes a range of verbs, from high to low cognitive level, needs to be activated. The highest would refer to such activities as reflecting and theorizing, the lowest to memorizing and recalling, while in between are various levels of activity. Therefore, assessment practice should give a sign to the students about what they should be learning and how they should be learning it (Biggs, 2011, p. 191).

According to Boud (1990, p. 101 cited in Gulikers, 2006) stated that “there is often a gap between what we require of students in assessment tasks and what occurs in the world of work”. While Gibbs (2004) argue that assessment works best to support learning when a series of conditions are meet. In the same way Snyder and Miller & Parlett found that ‘what influenced students most was not the teaching but the assessment’ (cited in Gibbs, 2004). These two ideas show the background of this study that deals with making assessment look more like professional practice in order to stimulate students to be critical thinker and to learn and develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need for their future working lives.

Although Indonesia is a developing country, Indonesia still strives to improve the quality of education. As stated in Times Higher Education, it rates no Indonesian University in the list of the top 400 global University or top 100 in Asian University in 2013 (WENR, 2014). It means Indonesian higher education has a big issue that

should be overcome. Based on the statement above, it is considered that assessment practices as one of main factors of educational improvement. Therefore, the writer needs to know the involvement of cognitive level in CBA course assessment tasks in considering the quality of assessment.

Recently, assessment practices in higher education is not well developed. A research conducted by Fitzpatrick (2015) analyzed the alignment of learning outcomes and assessment in Therapeutics course to foster higher order thinking. This study was aimed at determining whether national educational outcomes, course objectives, and classroom assessments for 2 therapeutics courses were aligned for curricular content and cognitive process, and if they included higher-order thinking. This study used document analysis and students focus group, and it also used Anderson and Krathwohl's taxonomy to define higher-order thinking. The result showed that only 33.8% of the assessment tasks in pharmacy school required higher-order thinking and 66.3% of the assessment required lower-order thinking.

1.2 Identification Problem

Based on the background above, the writer finds some problems considering the assessment practices. There is very little attention is given to conducting empirical studies in teaching learning process in Indonesian Higher Education institutions despite the needs for immediate improvements in the quality of Higher Educational instrument services (OECD/ADB, 2015). Since assessment is one of the important things in teaching learning process, teachers need to conduct a good assessment. Brookhart (2010) pointed out that holding students accountable for higher-order thinking by using assignments and assessments that require

intellectual work and critical thinking increases student motivation as well as achievement. Therefore the writer interested in analyzing the cognitive process involved in CBA course assessment tasks.

1.3 Research Question

As the problem stated above, the writer formulates the research question as follows:

- 1) How can CBA course assessment tasks in ELE-SP course units be described by the level of cognitive processes involved in them?

To answer that question detailed, the writer has made four sub research questions as follows:

- a) What types of assessment tasks are employed in CBA course unit?
- b) What types of cognitive processes are involved in each type of the assessment tasks in CBA course?
- c) What proportion of the assessment tasks in CBA course unit requires students to perform Low Order Thinking (LOT)?
- d) What proportion of the assessment tasks in CBA course unit requires students to perform High Order Thinking (HOT)?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to obtain a profile of cognitive processes involved in assessment tasks of ELE-SP CBA course units. Since assessment is important in the teaching learning process, study the cognitive process involved in CBA course

assessment task is important because it may be useful to evaluate the assessment itself in order to help teachers decide the assessment strategies.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The assessment practices in CBA course are divided into two kinds based on its time; summative and formative assessment. In this study, the writer focuses on the cognitive process involved in CBA course summative assessment tasks in English Department UNJ. The writer relate the assessment tasks in CBA course to the level of taxonomy based on the revised Bloom's taxonomy; remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create that are involved in assessment tasks in CBA course.

1.6 Significant of the Study

The significant of the study lays in providing better insight into factors that can support students' achievement in the learning process from the exploration of the cognitive process in assessment practices. Moreover, the result of this study is expected to evaluate the assessment task that is used in CBA course, and to give suggestion for more effective assessment should be implemented in CBA course. In addition, it also can be used as the source information for the students, lecturers, and the readers about the assessment practices.